

HB13-1211: CONCERNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY PROGRAMS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Current Problem:

In Colorado, over 110,000 students qualify as English Language Learners (ELL) and are faced with the challenge of acquiring a new language while mastering subject-area content. Funding is currently only provided for roughly 30% of the population, and without the adequate support, these students receive lower test scores and grades and are at a disadvantage compared to their classmates. This is represented in the 49% graduation rate of the ELL population in 2010, and aggravated by a 260% increase in the ELL population over the last 10 years.

In order to improve the educational and career opportunities for each ELL student in Colorado, local education providers establish English Language Proficiency programs. Currently, Colorado only provides funding for these students for two years, during which time only 1% of ELL students become proficient. ELP programs need to support the ELL student in development of both language acquisition and content proficiency, to allow ELL students to be post-secondary academic program ready.

Legislative Goals:

To better prepare ELL students for educational and career opportunities by strengthening ELP programs in their accountability, professional development and funding.

Accountability: The Department of Education and the State Board of Education must hold public education providers accountable for the development of ELLs through the administration and implementation of ELP programs. ELP program details will be reported annually to the Department of Education, including the assessing, developing, implementing and evaluation of each program by the local education provider.

Professional Development: In order for ELP programs to be administered effectively, educators must be supported by the Department of Education. The Department of Education will be responsible for collecting and sharing ELP best practices among districts. Most importantly, the Department of Education will:

- Provide guidance documents and technical support for the developing and implementing of ELP programs
- Provide professional development support to districts

Funding: The state will provide additional financial support for the districts to help them expand their ELP programs, both to expand professional development for the improvement of academic achievement of ELL students and to meet the new accountability standards. The “count method” is also changed to allow ELL students to be counted for up to five years, though the new funding is not linked to the changing count method.